

GOOD REASONS FOR A GOOD RESOLUTION NO. 2543

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 14, 1897
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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*"I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God;
 for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation,
 he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness,
 as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments,
 and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels."*

Isaiah 61:10

WITHOUT any preface we will go straight to our text at once. In the words of the prophet, we have two things brought before us—first, *a resolution to be glad*, and secondly, the *reasons for being glad*. Whenever a man makes a resolution, it should be because he has a good reason for doing so. And when he has a good reason for it, he ought to adhere to his resolution and carry it out to the fullest possible extent.

I want you, dear friends, because there are good reasons for it, to resolve that you will be glad in the Lord. Perhaps you are of a mournful spirit—it may be that you have peculiar trials just now—possibly, the very heaviness of the atmosphere makes you feel dull and sad. Never mind those things which would drag your spirit down.

At least for tonight, let us be glad, and if we can make that gladness overlap tomorrow, and if the stream should be sufficiently strong to flow right through the week to another Sabbath—and if the torrent should be vigorous enough to run right to the end of the year—and if the mighty flood should be broad enough to cover all the rest of our lives, it will not be even then an unreasonable thing.

I wish we could, each one of us, with such a divine inspiration as would enable us to continue it throughout eternity, say, “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God.” But if we cannot reach to such a full attainment of joy all at once, let us at least take a good mouthful of it even now—let us kneel down against the wellhead of heavenly bliss and drink a deep draught of holy joy at this glad hour.

I. First, we are to think about A RESOLUTION TO BE GLAD.

I notice, first, that the prophet’s determination to be glad in the Lord is made *without any reserve whatsoever*. “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God.” He says, “I *will*,” and then he says, “my soul *shall*.” He makes quite sure of it with his “will” and his “shall.” It is with him a firm, fixed, steadfast, unquestioned resolve that his soul shall be full of delight in the Lord.

Come, dear friends, and let us make the same resolve by the help of God’s Spirit. “I have a bad headache,” says one, “but I will rejoice in the Lord all the same for that.” “I have but very little at home, I am very poor,” I think I hear another say, but I trust you, too, will be able to add, “yet my soul shall be joyful in my God. If I cannot rejoice in earthly good things, I will rejoice in the highest good, even in God, who is goodness itself.”

“I fear,” says another friend, “that I shall have trouble as soon as I return home. I am afraid I shall hear some very ill news.” Let this message of the psalmist comfort your spirit—“He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD.” Do not keep any portion of your heart so as to leave room for grief or fear, but if you are a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, surrender yourself

completely to the highest form of enjoyment, and say here and now, “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God.”

Whilst the prophet’s resolution is wisely unreserved, notice how *hearty* it is. He says not merely, “I will rejoice in the LORD”—he is not going to be content with a cup full of joy, he means to have a well full of it. So he says, “I will *greatly* rejoice in the LORD.” The Lord is such a great God that if we rejoice in Him at all, we ought greatly to rejoice in Him.

Little sources of blessing may well produce little joy, but when we think of the great goodness of the great God to such great sinners as we have been, each one of us who has been greatly pardoned through the great sacrifice of Jesus may well say, “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD.”

Then the prophet adds, “My soul shall be joyful in my God.” “My very soul, my truest and best self, shall be joyful in my God. Not my lips alone, or the jubilant psalms which I shall sing, but my very soul shall be joyful in my God. I will sing as much as I can, but what I cannot sing, my soul shall feel. There shall be great waves of expressed joy, but there shall be vast unstirred deeps of heavenly calm within my innermost nature—‘My soul shall be joyful in my God.’”

We have sometimes seen people joyful just as far as the surface of their face. They tried to look glad, but underneath the smiling countenance there lurked a cruel grief. Have I not seen sparkling eyes which could not help betraying the inward fires of sorrow that burned in the heart’s inmost depths? Have I not heard men sing when their singing was almost a mockery, for had they expressed themselves as they felt, they would have groaned rather than have sung? But O my God, there shall be with me no mere semblance of joy, no feigning praise, no misrepresentation of the real feeling of my heart—“my soul shall be joyful in my God.”

I invite you, dear Christian friends—and I pray the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to enable you—to be as full of holy joy as ever you can be, for there is good reason for it and no harm can come of it. It is perfectly safe to take the deepest possible draughts of spiritual joy—this is a wine whereof a man may drink to the full, but he shall never be intoxicated.

You may be so enamored of earthly things as to perish through that love, but if you are so enraptured with your Lord that you find your whole delight in Him, you cannot possibly go to an excess in that direction. I am sure some of you have tried to sing the bass notes long enough—I want to get you to run up the scale till you reach the very highest notes that can be sung on earth.

You have sat down and groaned together in uncomfortable misery quite long enough. Now rouse yourselves from your sadness, shake off the dust of discontentment and sorrow, and let us sing together unto God, our exceeding joy, in whom there are fathomless depths of infinite delight.

So we have seen that this resolution to be glad is unreserved and very hearty—all the more hearty because it is double. “I will greatly rejoice,” says the prophet, and then he adds, “my soul shall be joyful.” You may say the same, dear friend—“I will be glad, and then I will be glad again. I will joy, and then I will rejoice. I will have a duplicate of it. I will repeat my delights and heap them up one upon another, as though by this Pelion on Ossa I should climb to the very heavens and sit down in the full joy of my God.” Oh, what a blessing it will be if many of you are helped to do this even now—and to continue doing it!

Further, notice that this unreserved and hearty resolution is *altogether spiritual*. “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God.” Joy in the creature must necessarily be limited, for the creature is limited. Joy in the creature may be harmful, for the creature may beguile you and allure you away from the Creator. Joy in yourself is a fiction—there can be no true satisfaction in it. Joy even in the work of God in your soul may sometimes be questionable, for you may not be sure that it is God’s work in which you are rejoicing.

But when you can say, “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God,” you have a subject for joy and an object of joy higher than I can ever describe. I thought, last night, as I turned this text over, the best thing that ever could have happened for me is that God is what He is. I could not wish Him to be other than He is—not even when He frowns upon me.

Blessed be His name, He never frowns upon His children except in love. He never smites them except in greater mercy than He could show by not striking them. He is altogether the best conceivable God. Ay, He is inconceivably, unutterably, boundlessly good—let His name be praised and magnified forever.

You may say to yourself, “I am a great many things that I ought not to be, but I have my God, and He is my Father and I am His child. And though He made the heavens and the earth, yet He loves me with an everlasting love, and He has set the whole of His heart’s affection upon me. Even worthless me, He loves with all the infinity of His divine nature.”

O friends, the thought of God should bring to our souls incessant pleasure! Think of any one person of the blessed Trinity in Unity—think of the Father and then see how you ought to rejoice that He is *your* Father, and *such* a Father.

Then think of the Son of God, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. His very name is honey in the mouth, and music in the ear, and light in the life, and heaven upon earth. Then think of the Holy Spirit, that divine person who deigns to take upon Himself the office of Comforter, that we may not know a sorrow which shall not be assuaged, that we may not bear a burden out of which He will not take all the heaviness and woe. Blessed Father, blessed Son, and blessed Holy Ghost, blessed be the Triune God forever and ever! “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God.” This joy in the Lord is all spiritual and in that kind of rejoicing you can never run to excess.

Let me drop into your mouth this piece of heavenly sweetmeat—“The Father himself loveth you.” Try to get the flavor of that precious Word, “*loveth* you.” I have often said that if God is kind to you, it is a great thing. If God thinks of you, that is a great thing. If God blesses you, that is a great thing. But if He *loves* you—ah! that is an almost unspeakable honor and joy, yet it is true.

You knew once what it was to be loved by an affectionate mother, you know now what it is to love your child. But God loves you in a more intense way even than that, for all the loves of men and women are but the spray of the great ocean of His everlasting love. “Oh, but!” say you, “there are so many for God to love.” That is true, yet He loves you as much as if there were no other person in the whole universe, as if you stood alone with the eye of JEHOVAH fixed upon you and the whole heart of JEHOVAH wrapping you round about in its divine folds of affection.

“The Father himself loveth you.” May the Holy Spirit teach you to draw the sweetness of those words into your soul! “The Father himself loveth you.” Yea, more, if He loves you now, He always did love you. He has loved you with an everlasting love—loved you ere yonder stars began to let their light shine down among the sons of men. Before He had fixed the universe upon the huge pillars of His almighty power, He loved you and your names were graven upon the palms of His hands, yea, upon His heart. And He will love you when this great earth and sun and moon and stars shall have passed away. As a moment’s foam dissolves into the wave that bears it and is lost forever, so shall the material creation pass away—but God shall still love you even as He loves His only-begotten Son, forever and forever.

Please observe also that the prophet’s resolution related to *immediate* joy, though there is also a future meaning in his words. “I *will* greatly rejoice in the LORD,” expresses a present determination as well as a resolve concerning the future. I hope greatly to rejoice in God if I should live to be grey-headed, and to be bent double with infirmities. But I *will* greatly rejoice in the Lord at this moment.

It is true that you or I may lie upon a bed of sickness, and draw near to the gates of death, and I trust that, even then, we shall greatly rejoice in the Lord and be joyful in our God. But our text really means that, even now, we will be glad in Him. Come, dear friends, let us each one say, “I will now, at this very moment, greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God. Away, you cares, be gone from me, for He cares for me. Away all thoughts of sin, for Christ has cast my sins behind His back into the depths of the sea. Away all fear of the future, for my times are in His hand. Away all murmuring, all complaining at the providence of God—my soul cries, ‘Thy will be done, O Lord! Not as I will, but as

You will.”” When you reach that point, you may well say, “Now will I greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God.”

I think if I stopped now, and said nothing more, you might say to me, “You have given us reasons enough to make us full of joy and to cause each one of us gladly to cry, “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God.”

II. But now, in the second place, I am going to give you, from the text, other GOOD REASONS FOR BEING GLAD.

The first is found in the *divine clothing* here mentioned—“He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation.” Did you ever behold your soul naked to its shame in the sight of the all-seeing JEHOVAH? Did you ever try to hide yourself from God because you were under a deep sense of sin? And did you hear His penetrating voice calling you, as He called Adam in the garden, “Where art thou? Where art thou? Where art thou?”

Did you stay away from divine service and did you still hear in your soul the Lord’s question, “Where art thou?” Did you try to bury yourself in your business, so as to forget that urgent inquiry, and did it still ring in your ears, “Where art thou?” Did you rush off to some place of amusement and try amid worldly companions to forget yourself and your God, and did the voice still follow you, ever calling, “Where art thou? Where art thou?”

And were you obliged, at last, to stand shivering before the Lord, without a rag to cover you, your fig leaves all withered with a glance of His eye of fire, and did He then cover you with the garments of salvation? Oh, then you knew the meaning of my text, when you were no longer ashamed, for you were covered with the robe of Christ’s righteousness, you were clothed with the garments of salvation and you could say, “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God.”

Let every child of God here rejoice that he is clothed with the garments of salvation. From head to foot you are arrayed in salvation. “Oh!” says one, “I have been such a great sinner.” Yes, but if you are trusting in Christ, He has saved you. He has put away your sin—you shall not be lost, for you are clothed with salvation.

“But I am such a poor feeble creature, liable to be attacked and tempted by Satan.” Yet God has so clothed you that no cold nor heat of temptation shall come upon you to your harm. You are clothed from head to foot with the garments that will save you—the garments of salvation—yea, you are even now a saved man, woman, or child.

What a wondrous dress this is—the garments of salvation! A helmet of salvation and the shoes of the preparation of the Gospel of peace, and all between the head and the feet—the entire person of the man—is covered with salvation. Think of this, dear friend. Wherever you go, you have God’s livery upon you.

Some princes clothe their courtiers in silk, but God has clothed you in salvation. Was there ever such another dress as this? Now will you not sing? Why, when you are clad in such a robe as this, if you do not sing, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. Surely you must praise the Lord. While clothed in that marvelous attire which only the Sacred Trinity could have made for you—“garments of salvation”—you must be joyful in your God. Come, my good brother, join the rejoicing band.

Is that Mr. Ready-to-halt over there? Do you recollect what happened when Mr. Great-heart cut off the head of Giant Despair? When the conductor of the pilgrims came back to the road where he had left Feeble-mind and Ready-to-halt to guard the women of the company—as soon as these poor men saw that it was really the giant’s head, “They were very jocund and merry, and Ready-to-halt would dance. True,” says Mr. Bunyan, “he could not dance without one crutch in his hand, but I promise you he footed it well.” So, some of the timid, feeble ones do manage to get extraordinary joy when their spirits are revived by some special manifestation of the lovingkindness of the Lord.

Then, beside this divine clothing, there is *sacred covering*. The prophet adds, “He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness.” That is the great mantle that goes over all the rest of the garments. We

are first clothed with the garments of salvation, and then there comes an outer covering to envelop us in the robe of righteousness.

When God looks on a justified sinner, He sees nothing in Him but righteousness, for He is covered with the robe of righteousness. That word "cover" is one of the sacred words of the Hebrew language, as well as of our own English tongue. It seems to go everywhere, into all languages. The atonement of Christ and the righteousness of Christ make up the great and perfect covering of a sinner. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

The mercy seat of old was a great cover or coffer that went over the ark of the covenant. And God has covered up His people in Christ, as we express it in the prayer we sometimes sing,—

*"Him and then the sinner see,
Look through Jesu's wounds on me."*

When God looks at His people, He does not see them first, but He sees His Son. And then He looks through that heavenly medium and sees them in His Son. Then is it indeed true that he has covered them with the robe of righteousness. Wherefore, poor sinful child of God, crying out because of your sin, cease that moaning and groaning for a little while, nay, have done with it altogether, and let your soul be joyful in the Lord.

One of His names is, "The Lord our righteousness," and Christ, "is made unto us righteousness." We are righteous in the righteousness of Christ which is imputed unto us. In the fifty-third of Isaiah we read, "By his knowledge," that is, "by the knowledge of him, shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities."

I wish I knew how to speak of these glorious truths as I feel them in my own soul, but I cannot find words worthy of the wondrous theme. I have this holy joy in my own heart and it makes my spirit burn with a divine delight. Oh, that I could communicate that delight to others, even without any words. But God the Holy Ghost can make this joy flash from heart to heart, till we all feel as if we could—

*"Sit and sing ourselves away
To everlasting bliss,"*

clothed with the garments of salvation and covered with the robe of righteousness.

You will have to look in the margin of your Bible to get the next reason for being glad, which is, *hallowed service*. Our text says, "He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments." The marginal reading is, "as a bridegroom decketh himself as a priest."

Our text must mean that, because in the sixth verse it is written, "ye shall be named the priests of the LORD." So, when God comes to clothe His people, He clothes them with such robes that they are fit to execute their priestly office. I think there is nothing that I detest more than the idea of priest-craft and I hope that you do the same. Who is any poor mortal man that he should interpose himself between a sinner and his Savior? Take care to go straight away to Christ.

But in the true Scriptural sense, there is a priesthood which belongs to all Christians, and I want you to understand, poor believer, notwithstanding all your infirmities and imperfections, that the Lord has so covered you with the righteousness of Christ that you are clad in a priest's holy vestments. You have all over you the pure white linen, which is the righteousness of saints, and you are wearing that royal miter which permits you to exercise the priesthood, for He "hath made us kings and priests unto God." We are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people."

O child of God, how glad you would be if you could really rejoice in all this! Just think of it—at this moment you are a priest unto God on behalf of the world. The dumb world cannot speak to God, but you are to speak to Him in the place of the whole animate and inanimate creation. You are a priest unto the Most High. The rest of mankind must be ploughmen, and vine-dressers, and tend the flocks, and mind

earthly things, but you, as a believer, have to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus and to make everything you have to do into a daily sacrifice unto God.

What a wonderful thing it is that you, who once were only fit to associate with devils—you who were black as hell itself, are now, through faith in Christ—made so clean and are so gloriously arrayed that you may stand before the Lord and swing the censer to and fro, and let the sweet perfume of your praises fill the whole house and ascend acceptably unto God. You may stand here and offer unto God the living sacrifice of your entire being, which shall be holy, acceptable unto God by Jesus Christ, your Savior.

Will you not be glad that it is so? Made a priest unto God, *can* you be miserable? You *must* not. Do you not remember that the priests were never to mar the corners of their beards? They were not to shave their heads, or to adopt the common customs of men in mourning, because they were God's servants, and they must be glad and rejoice before Him.

Ordained to such a sacred office as the priesthood, put on your ornaments, yea, put on your beautiful robe that is all of blue. Christ gives to you a garment fringed with holy bells, which cause you, wherever you go, to sound forth the sweet tinklings of holy joy, for He makes even you to be like unto Himself for glory and for beauty, and to stand before the presence of God without fear, accepted in Himself. What a good reason for joy there is in all this!

Now I must bring you back again to the text, that you may see that there is a joy here which is perhaps the sweetest of all, that is, the joy of *heavenly marriage*—“as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments.” “A bridegroom!” Then it is true that I, a poor stranger and an alien, am married unto Christ. There is the mention of a bride and a bridegroom, too, and it is all to impress upon us this idea, that every believing soul is joined unto Christ in a true, real, mystical, conjugal union which shall never be broken.

“*Quis separabit?*” “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” JEHOVAH hates putting away, so He will never divorce a soul that is once married to Him. Now are we no longer our own, but we belong to Christ, and our song, the sweetest that can be sung this side of heaven, is,—

***I my Best-beloved's am,
And He is mine.***

“My beloved is mine, and I am his; he feedeth among the lilies.” There is no angel with whom Christ has entered into union as He has with you and with me. “He took not on him the nature of angels.” He took not up angels, but He has taken upon Him the nature of the seed of Abraham. He came here as a man, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. The Head of all the redeemed is Christ. His name is named on us, and as surely as Adam is our sire, so surely is Christ the second Adam, our Heavenly Bridegroom. Glory be unto His holy name!

Oh, that this blessed marriage union were more fully understood by us and that our expectancy bestirred us to wait with sacred impatience till the time when He shall come to take us to Himself to be one with Him, partakers of His throne, and of His crown, and of His glory, forever and forever! Come, my brothers and sisters, have I not given you a grand reason for making as your own this good resolution of the prophet, “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God”?

Last of all, to work out the whole text, we have here *attractive adornment*—“as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.” So that every believer in Christ is a person goodly to look upon—in the esteem of God, he is fair and lovely. “He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.”

Does it not surprise you that God should ever have seen anything beautiful in you? My heart has often melted when I have read those words of the Heavenly Bridegroom to His spouse, “Turn away

thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me." What? My eyes! shall they ever overcome my blessed Bridegroom?

Yes, and He says to you, believer, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." So thoroughly has He washed and cleansed you, that He beholds His own image reflected in your eyes and He takes infinite delight in what He has made you by His grace. "He will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing."

I want you, each one, to drink in this blessed truth, if you can. Not only that you are not the object of hatred to God, but that you are the object of His intense delight. Not only that you never cause anger to spring up in His bosom, for His anger is turned away from you, but that you even raise in His heart emotions of divine affection. You are thus able to hold the King in His inner chamber of communion and to say to Him, "I will not let thee go."

O beloved, if you did but realize where you once were and where you now are—and where you shall be forever and ever—you would be ready to leap for joy. Come, then, will you not be glad in your Lord? What! Is some little petty trial to rob God of His glory? I have said to myself, sometimes, when I have been sore sick and have become fearfully depressed through pain, "If I get over this illness, I will give God a sevenfold portion of thankful service and praise."

I have tried to pay up my arrears when I recovered. I have thought, "I am afraid, while I was full of pain, I was very dull, and stupid, and despondent, and almost despairing. Now that I have got rid of all that, I will let my dear Lord see whether I cannot make up a little for lost time."

I want you, dear friends, to do so from this very hour. Go home, and sit down, and bless the Lord. Sometimes, even singing is not good enough to present to our God, and music cannot convey all we want to say. Then let—

"Expressive silence muse His praise."

Sit still and mediate on all the Lord's goodness to you and so keep out all sadness while you bless His holy name. I like sometimes to be like those beautiful lilies that send up a long straight stem and then throw out a lovely flower in which white and gold are charmingly blended, just as if they would give God all they could. They cannot say a word, but they stand quite still and they seem to bless the Lord by standing still and looking so beautiful.

I like to sit down and feel as if He had made me to consider the lilies, and so to consider them that I would do just the same as they do—just show myself to Him—as much as to say, "See, my Lord, what You have done for me? I was a poor, lost, all-but-condemned wretch, yet You have made me a prince of the blood royal. You have lifted me from the dunghill and set me among Your saints. Glory, glory, glory, glory be unto Your dear name forever and ever!"

While I have been talking about this choice theme, I have been grieving over the many who know not by personal experience what it is to have this great change wrought within them. Dear friends, let me tell you, once for all, that you cannot make yourselves fit for heaven, you cannot clothe yourselves with the garments of salvation. You cannot renew your own nature.

Somebody says, "But sir, you discourage people by telling them that they cannot change themselves." That is the very thing I want to do. "Oh, but I want to set a man working!" says one. Do you? I want to set him not working, that is to say, I want him to have done with any idea that salvation is of himself. I want him to drop that thought altogether, and just to feel that, if his salvation is to come out of himself, he has to get everything out of nothing, and that is not only difficult, but impossible. He has to get life out of his own death, to get cleanliness out of the filthy ditch of his own nature, out of which it can never come.

Discouragement of this sort is the very thing I always aim at in my preaching. I am afraid that there are many people who are made to believe that they are saved when they are not. My belief is that God never healed a man till he was wounded and that he never made a man alive till he was dead. It is God's

way first to drag us down and make us feel that we are nothing, and can do nothing, and that we are shut up to be saved by grace—that Christ must save us from beginning to end, or else we can never be saved at all.

Oh, if I could but bring all my hearers not only into a state of discouragement, but into a condition of despair about themselves, then I should know that they were on the road to a simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! Our extremity is God's opportunity. Oh, how I long to get you all to that extremity!

*"Tis perfect poverty alone,
That sets the soul at large;
While we can call one mite our own,
We have no full discharge."*

It is absolute helplessness and death that lays the sinner where Christ can deal with him. When he is nothing, Christ shall be everything. Have you never heard of the man who saw a person drowning and plunged into the river after him and swam to him? The poor fellow tried to clutch his rescuer, but the swimmer knew that—if he let the man get hold of him, he could not bring him ashore, so he kept swimming round him. The man went down and still his rescuer swam around him, but did not touch him. He went down again because the swimmer could see that he was still too strong, and when he was just going down the third time, then the wise rescuer laid hold of him, for he was helpless, and so could not impede his deliverer.

That is what you have to be, dear friends. When you cannot do anything, then you cannot any longer hinder Christ. But as long as you can do a hand's turn, you will hamper my dear Lord and Master. Your business is just to yield yourself right up into His hands to be saved by Him alone.

"Are there to be no good works?" asks someone. Oh, yes! plenty of them, as soon as ever Christ has saved you. The first thing the man does when he has quitted his own works and given himself up entirely to Christ, is to cry, "Lord, what wilt thou have me do? You have saved me. Now I will do all I can, not for my self-salvation, but to glorify You and show men what Your grace has done, and so express in some poor feeble way the gratitude I feel for the free salvation which Your grace has given me."

Some of you will have to go down once or twice more before the Lord Jesus Christ will give you eternal salvation. You are too good yet, you are too big yet, you are too strong yet—you have such a very respectable character yet that you are not content to come in at Christ's back door, where He receives none but poor, guilty sinners.

You are not quite naked yet—brother, there is a rag or two of your own righteousness about you. You will have to be stripped and then you shall put on the robe of Christ's righteousness. You have only a bone or two broken and you can crawl about a little—you have yet to be ground to powder yet. When you become just nothing—when you have no good feelings, no good desires, or anything you can bring to Christ—when you come to Christ, not *with* a broken heart, but *for* a broken heart, then He will receive you, then you will be the kind of man that Christ came to save.

Oh, that He would bring you to that point very speedily, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

ISAIAH 61

Verse 1. *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me;*

These are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. The prophet, looking forward to the time of His coming into the world, put them into His mouth, and in due time, our Savior read them and applied them

to Himself in the synagogue at Nazareth as He said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me;"

1. Because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,

God has sent Christ to bind up the broken-hearted. Then, will He not do it? Will He refuse, my broken-hearted brother or sister, to bind *you* up? O deeply-troubled, tempest-tossed spirit, will the Anointed One reject you and refuse to fulfill His office upon you? Never, it is both His name and His office to save, for He is called Jesus, the Savior. O broken-hearted one, look to Him. Hear Him say, at this moment, "JEHOVAH has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted,"

1. To proclaim liberty to the captives,

Where are you, poor, wretched bond-slaves of sin, fettered with the iron chains of despair? Christ proclaims liberty even to *you*. Trust Him and you shall be—

*"Freed from sin, and walk at large,
Your Savior's blood your full discharge."*

"JEHOVAH hath sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives,"

1. And the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

There is a general discharge of prisoners. The time has come for it. Christ died to make it possible—He lives to perfect the emancipation of all for whom He died. He comes, by His Spirit, to give you the experience of it—"the opening of the prison to them that are bound."

2. To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;

Oh, what precious words are these! Christ comes, commissioned of the Father, "to comfort all that mourn."

3. To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

This message is spoken to all the Lord's people, but it has a special reference to the Jews, God's ancient people. Happy times are coming for them in the years that yet lie in the future, when they accept the Messiah whom they have so long rejected.

4. And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.

In the days to come, Judea shall again be inhabited and the ruined cities shall be built up once more. God will bring back His ancient people, converting them to the true faith and clothing them with glory. As for ourselves, this verse is true in another sense. If we believe in Jesus, that part of us which has been given up to waste shall yet be turned to usefulness and to God's praise.

5-6. And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers. But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD:

This was true of God's ancient people, but it is true of us also. Let us cast away our earthly cares—let our only care be to serve our God—for then, strangers shall stand and feed our flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be our ploughmen and our vinedressers, but we, "shall be named the Priests of the LORD."

6. Men shall call you the Ministers of our God: you shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves.

God's chosen people are His children. All the rest of mankind are only His servants, and the servants must wait upon the children whether they like it or not. Even of the angels in heaven it is written, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" All things are the servants of the man who is the servant of God. He who is consecrated to God shall find all

things consecrated to him. When all that is yours works for God, then all things shall work together for good for you.

7-8. *For your shame ye shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them. For I the LORD love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering;*

God cannot endure that we should sacrifice to Him what we have gained by oppression and wrong-doing. Some men seem to try to cut themselves in halves and then say, “So much is to be secular and so much is to be sacred.” Do not you believe it. You are only one man, and what you are in secular things, that you are altogether.

You cannot say, “So much is to be religion and so much is to be business.” If your religion is not your business, and if your business does not melt into your religion, there is not much that is good in you. We cannot say, “I shall do this because it is religion, and I shall do that because it is business.” No, no. The man is one and there is nothing to a Christian that can be marked off as secular—for all things are sacred to the man who truly serves God.

8-9. *And I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the LORD hath blessed.*

A visible stamp of divine blessing shall be upon believers in Christ. “They are the seed which the LORD hath blessed,” and all men shall acknowledge that it is so.

10-11. *I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.*

So may it be right speedily, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM OUR OWN “HYMN BOOK”—721, 758, 775

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.